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SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICAL TRAINING

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Portuguese-speaking African countries, namely, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde Islands, Sao Tome & Principe, Angola and Mozambique, attained political independence only in 1975. They are therefore relatively young countries when compared with the other countries of the region, especially as far as the taking of economic and social decisions is concerned.

2. Although there is within the countries of the group, an awareness of the importance of statistics in the economic and social development process, these countries did not have any organised structure in this field at the time they attained political independence. Indeed, prior to 1975, there were only expatriates of the Portuguese National Statistical Institute in each of the countries concerned. The duty of these expatriates was to collect a few statistical data especially on foreign trade, and send them to Lisbon for processing and analysis. After 1975, the Ministries in charge of the drawing up, control and evaluation of the initial economic and social development plans in the countries felt there was an urgent need to have some up-to-date statistical data Statistical Services were therefore established rather quickly to meet that needs, with more or less inexperienced staff without the necessary statistical training.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT OF SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICAL TRAINING

3. In one of its recommendations, the second session of the Conference of African Statisticians held in Addis Ababa in October, 1977, requested that a special assistance be earmarked for the Portuguese-speaking African countries, to enable them meet their statistical staff requirements. It was then decided that, the specific requirements to be accorded particular attention in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) should include special assistance to the countries of the group. The Conference was of the opinion that a separate project should probably be drawn up for these countries because of the specific problems they would be facing.

4. A working session was immediately organised after the Conference to consider ways and means of implementing that recommendation. Apart from the three officials from the Statistics Division of the ECA, representatives of Angola, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau participated in that working session. Discussions at the session were followed by exchange of correspondence between ECA and all the countries of the group as well as visits by regional advisers. In the light of the discussions, it became clear that the Statistical Training Centres participating in the STPA had a major role to play in meeting the statistical staff requirements of the Portuguese-speaking African countries.

5. The question was therefore placed on the agenda of the first meeting of Directors of Centres participating in STPA, held in Addis Ababa, from 22 to 26 October 1979. These Directors were requested to make suggestions regarding appropriate steps to be taken to attain that objective. It then emerged that several training options could be envisaged and pursued, namely:

(i) Establishment of one or two statistical training institutes which could be used by the countries of the group.

(ii) Utilization of the existing STPA centres,

(iii) Utilization of the Statistical Training Centres situated outside the region, and

(iv) Development of training programmes for each country of the group.

6. The conclusions of the discussion of the Directors of the STPA centres were first endorsed by the first Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers held in March 1980, then submitted to the sixth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers held in April of the same year. That conference recommended that a meeting of the Directors of Statistics Departments of the countries concerned be organised to discuss, in more detail, problems of common interest to the countries of the group and find practical solutions to them. In preparation of that meeting, a first mission to assess the statistical training needs of these countries was undertaken by the ECA in June-July 1980. It discussed with the competent authorities the ways and means of implementing the various possible solutions and evaluated the existing statistical training facilities in each country.

7. The main conclusions of that mission were discussed during the meeting of the representatives of the countries concerned, held in Addis Ababa from 20 to 22 October 1980. Only Mozambique was absent at that meeting. It was made clear that the obstacles imposed by the conditions of admission into the existing training centres and the fact that prospective candidates who had met the minimum entry requirements could not leave their posts to follow full-time middle and senior level courses, made it impossible to utilise at the time the training centres participating in the STPA. Undoubtedly, the choice of the representatives of the countries concerned strongly went for Portuguese as the medium of teaching. Given all these parameters, the meeting felt that it was essential to lay emphasis on the following solutions:

(i) widen and develop the on-going training programme;

(ii) establish a middle level training centre or develop the Lubango Centre, in Angola, and

(iii) encourage participation in short-term courses and seminars.

8. In view of these conclusions of the meeting of the representatives of the countries of the group, ECA first took measures to strengthen the Lubango Training Centre to enable it offer services at regional level. In that connection, consultation missions were sent to the competent authorities of the Portuguese-speaking African countries in 1981 and 1982. It was clear from these missions that all the countries of the group were in principle agreable to the idea of using the Lubango Centre, but were not ready to send students there immediately because of the prevailing situation in Southern Africa.

9. Considering the situation and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the project for the strengthening of the Lubango Centre, the third meeting of the Directors of the Centres participating in the STPA held in Addis Ababa from 31 October to 4 November 1983 was of the view that emphasis should be placed on actions for training at national levels. The meeting therefore approved the ECA proposal to draw up a guide syllabus for the on-going middle level, manpower training which takes into account the conditions of the Portuguse-speaking African countries.

10. The new realistic proposal given by ECA to the project, had been noted with satisfaction by the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers, at its third session held in Addis Ababa from 5 to 14 March 1984. The new action programme drawn up by ECA, within the framework of the special assistance to the countries of the group, was aimed at :

(i) informing the governments of the countries, the importance of statistics in economic and social development process and the need to establish a reliable statistics system;

(ii) collecting quantitative and qualitative data required for the evaluation of the statistical training requirements in each of the countries of the group;

(iii) gathering information for the formulation of a guide syllabus of the on-going statistical training programme, adapted to the specific conditions of the Portuguse-speaking African countries; and

(iv) assisting in formulating programmes for the on-going statistical training of the middle level staff at the level of development of each of the countries of the group.

III. ECA'S ACTIONS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES

1. Actions already taken

11. Since the new plan of the project for special assistance to Portuguese-speaking African countries was re-formulated, the first action of the ECA, within the framework of the regional statistical training programme for Africa (STPA), was to undertake an evaluation study of the statistical training requirements of the countries of the group. That study was conducted by an ECA statistical training Adviser and a staff of the National Statistics Institute of Portugal, recruited by ECA as a Consultant. That study was preceded by a mission to the five countries of the group between February and April, 1984. In addition to the purpose of the mission which was to collect quantitative and qualitative data needed for the evaluation study, the officials also took advantage of their presence in the countries of the group to implement the first two parts of the new programme drawn up by ECA, namely, (i) inform the governments of the countries the importance of statistics in economic and social development process and the need for a reliable statistics system and (ii) gather information leading to the formulation of a guide syllabus for the on-going statistical training, adapted to the specific conditions of the countries of the group.

Summary of the Study of the Statistical training needs of the Portuguese-speaking African countries

12. Despite the fact that there is, generally, some degree of awarness of the importance of statistics in the economic and social development process of the countries concerned, this awareness should further be translated into more practical actions aimed at according greater priority to the collection, processing and analysis of statistical data. The statistical systems being introduced in the Portuguese-speaking African countries conferred on the National Statistics Departments the right:

(i) to be the only national bodies authorised to analyse and disseminate statistical information on their countries;

(ii) to supply statistical data necessary for the evaluation and control of the economic and social development of their countries;

(iii) plan different methods for the collection of statistical data.

13. Generally, although the organizational structure of the statistical systems organised or proposed for the countries of the group, in principle, enables an exhaustive collection of reliable statistical data required for the drawing up of economic and social plans, it does not cater for the present situation of the statistics staff related to these systems. Indeed, it has been observed that the Portuguese-speaking African countries suffer from lack of sufficient numbers of staff with adequate statistical training.

14. The staff regulations of the Portuguese-speaking African countries provide for three categories of staff in the field of statistics: Senior technicians, middle level technicians and professional technicians. The first category is used for the classification of all senior statistical management staff and related disciplines, Economics statisticians, Statisticians, Demographers, Economists and Mathematicians performing statistical duties. The staff of the second and third categories are respectively comparable to senior and junior statistical assistants.

15. It should not be forgotten that, at least for the moment, most of the high echelon technicians working in the five Portuguese-speaking African countries have not received the same type of formal training in statistics as those of the French-speaking or English-speaking African countries. The same remark goes for the other two categories for whom the only criteria used for their classification were the level of their basic general education and several years of experience. In all the five countries covered by the study, the present total strength of their statistical staff is as follows:

- about 25 senior technicians, 16 of whom are working in the National Statistics Departments;

- about 519 staff some of whom may be compared with middle level technicians and, the greater majority, with professional technicians.

16. It should be emphasized also that it was not possible to evaluate comprehensively the number of statisticians working in all the sectors of the countries concerned. However, generally, a serious lack of trained statistical staff was underscored in the five countries, both at the middle and high levels.

17. Besides, it was noted that although the level of the training of the senior technicians enabled them to execute their task efficiently, the level of the training of the middle level staff on the other hand falls short in this respect, and the national heads of statistics often have to resort to Seminars and courses to raise a little the aptitudes of the middle level and professional technicians to enable them carry out certain specific statistical duties. These two categories of staff were most of the time, either trained on the job or through seminars or courses.

18. During the evaluation of the training needs for the 1984-1989 period, the study took into consideration the following two criteria:

- existing posts to be filled in the new organizational chart during the next five years,
- projects for the decentralization of the statistical activities at national level, in relation to the size of the country.

19. The following tables contain data collected in the five countries of the group, relating on the one hand, to the present statistical staff position and on the other, the evaluation of the statistical training needs of each category of staff and each country for the 1984-1989 period:

i) Category of Senior technicians

	Present Position				Training Needs			
Country	Central Stat. Dept.	Other Depts. of the Public Service	Other Sectors	Total	Central Stat. Dept.	Other Depts. of the Public Service	Other Sectors	Total
Angola	7	-	-	7	8	7	-	15
Cape Verde	2	1	-	3	10	5	5	20
Guinea Bissau	3	2	-	5	2	4	1	7
Mozambique	6	4	-	10	4	4	9	17
Sao Tome & Principe	-	-	-	-	4	2	1	7
TOTAL	18	7	-	25	28	22	16	66

ii) Categories of middle level and professional technicians

Preliminary observations: In the light of paragraph 15 above, it was difficult or impossible, to determine the difference between the strength of the staff of the two categories. Besides, apart from the staff of the senior technician category, the training needs of the middle level and professional technicians also included those of the two categories currently working in the Statistics Departments of the countries of the group. In fact, these staff had no basic training in statistics prior to their recruitment and therefore need to take either refresher courses or undergo on the job training in statistics.

	Present Position				Training Needs			
Country	Central Stat. Dept.	Other Depts. of the Public Service	Other Sectors	Total	Central Stat. Dept.	Other Depts. of the Public Service	Other Sectors	Total
Angola	149	-	-	149	51	252	-	303
Cape Verde	24	4	-	28	72	22	27	121
Guinea Bissau	14	61	-	75	64	62	17	143
Mozambique	114	107	-	221	183	111	60	354
Sao Tome & Principe	16	30	-	46	23	57	1	81
TOTAL	317	202	-	319	393	504	105	1002

20. In the light of discussions held with the national heads and the results of the evaluation of their needs, the study attempted to bring up precise solutions which, when implemented, the greater part of the statistical training needs of the countries of the group would be met.

21. With regard to the training needs of the senior technicians, the study recommended:

- that Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe establish contact with the College of Statistics of Dakar with a view to studying the modalities of using permanently this Centre for the training of their statisticians. It should be pointed out that Cape Verde has already tried and succeeded in training two of its nationals at the College of Statistics of Dakar. After an intensive course in French and mathematics, these nationals of Cape Verde successfully completed the cycle of training in statistics and were awarded diplomas in 1984. Guinea Bissau has also started using the same centre by sending two students to study with the 1984-1987 batch, bringing to four the number of students from the Portuguese-speaking countries: two from Guinea Bissau and two from Cape Verde. In the past, Guinea Bissau had trained two of its nationals at ITPEA in Algiers;

- that Angola and Mozambique continue to use their national universities for the training of their social statistics technicians. To better prepare these future senior statistical staff, it would be necessary that these universities review and, where possible, harmonise their course curricula for the students in the Faculty of Economics or Mathematics, by intensifying the courses in mathematics and/or statistics;

- that the five countries explore together the possibilities of sending their students for training abroad to Portugal, Brazil, Cuba, Romania, etc. and for assistance within the framework of the bilateral co-operation.

22. With regard to the training of middle level technicians (senior statistical assistant level), the study recommended:

- that Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome & Principe, and to some extent, Equatorial Guinea, should consider establishing a joint training centre in one of their countries. The most economical solution would be to use the equipped infrastructures already existing in Bissau: the new administration training centre, situated within the big complex constructed with assistance from America. The portion of this complex which is to be used for training in statistics contains:

  - 5 class-rooms, well equipped
  - 2 lecturer's common rooms
  - 1 Documentation office
  - 1 Administration block

- That Angola and Mozambique consider establishing national training centres to meet their immediate requirements for the training of middle level technicians, until such time that the conditions become ripe for the re-opening of the Lubango Training Centre in Angola. These national centres may be opened within the already existing training schools so as to reduce cost.

- That the five countries of the group continue to explore, in addition to the solutions proposed above, the possibility of training their middle level technicians within the framework of their bilateral co-operation with such countries as Cuba, Brazil, Portugal...

23. Finally, as regards the needs for the training of professional technicians (Junior statistical assistant level), the study strongly recommended the organisation, at the level of each country of the group, of programmes for the on-going training. These programmes will aim at: assisting the countries in raising the level of the statistical staff already in office and (ii) assist a certain number of the staff to acquire the required qualifications in preparation for taking the competitive examination for admission into African statistical training centres, in this case, the College of Statistics of Dakar. The following three alternatives may be taken into consideration during the preparation of these programmes for the on-going training: (i) utilization of the services of a consultant on short-term basis, (ii) utilization of the services of an expert for a longer period (one year for instance) in the case of countries which have rather large number of staff to train; (iii) training of one or two instructors. To ensure smooth implementation of these training programmes, it is necessary to develop technical materials (course support materials) in Portuguese.

24. The second action of the ECA was to draw up a draft guide syllabus for in-service training programme for the middle level staff. That guide syllabus was prepared in Portuguese by the Consultant mentioned above and distributed to the Leaders of the countries of the group and to certain specialists for their comments and suggestions. The draft guide syllabus was accepted by the countries of the group and ECA ensured its wide dissemination.

25. Following recommendations contained in the report of the mission to Mozambique, this country expressed the desire to have the assistance of ECA in preparing a project document for the financing of its training programme. To that end, an ECA Statistical Training Adviser undertook a mission to Maputo from 5 to 16 March 1985 with a view to gathering information necessary for the preparation of the project document. The document was then prepared and forwarded to the authorities of the countries concerned for signature by the appropriate national authorities and submission to the Resident UNDP Representative of the country.

2. On-going actions

26. Within the context of the conclusions of the evaluation study, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome & Principe are each currently launching a statistical training programme in order to satisfy their needs of professional technicians. After an exchange of correspondence between the Statistics Division of the ECA and the authorities of the two countries, it was agreed that a consultant should be recruited by ECA to assist them in their task.

27. A high level statistician was therefore recruited from the Institute of Statistics of Portugal as a Consultant in May 1985. She will spend three months in each of the two countries mentioned above. After preliminary discussions with UNDP and heads of the National Statistics Departments on all the aspects of the organisation of the training programme, it was agreed that the consultant should prepare, with the consent of the National Statistics Departments, a detailed course programme of the main subjects to be taught, using as a basis, the draft guide syllabus for in-service training programme for the Portuguese-speaking African countries. The actual launching of the statistics training programme will take place after these tasks have been accomplished.

3. Future Actions of the ECA

28. ECA intends continuing its assistance to the countries of the group for the preparation of project documents relating to the financing of on-going national statistical training programmes, to be submitted to the interested donors, of course, upon request by the countries concerned. Similarly, the recruitment of consultants, financed under the STPA Project for the launching of national training programmes, will be pursued by ECA.

29. When the idea of establishing one location (within the Administration Training Centre of Bissau) for the training of middle level technicians (junior statistical assistant level) is accepted by the countries concerned, namely, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome & Principe and possibly Equatorial Guinea, ECA will offer assistance in the formulation of a project document to be submitted to interested donor agencies. The same assistance could be given to Angola and Mozambique which, in view of the size of their territories and the needs of the two countries in terms of middle level technicians, they were advised to consider establishing national units for the training of this category of staff.

IV. JOINT ACTIONS BY THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER NATIONAL OR MULTI-NATIONAL BODIES

30. During the mission organised by the ECA to the Portuguese-speaking African countries, it was emphasized that actions to be taken by ECA within the framework of the regional component of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) with a view to meeting the statistical training needs of the Portuguese-speaking African countries, could be effective only if they were backed by joint actions of both the U.N. specialized agencies and other national and multi-national bodies.

31. The countries of the group stressed that the technical and financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the national IPF would be highly desirable as part of the special assistance to the countries of the group. This support would take the form of the establishment of facilities for the training of middle level and professional technicians within each of these countries. With regard to middle level technicians, UNDP offices in Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome & Principe should pool their efforts to assist in the search for the necessary funding for a possible establishment of one training location within the Administration Training Centre of Guinea Bissau. Similarly, UNDP assistance to Mozambique and Angola for the establishment within these countries, of national units for the training of their middle level technicians would be highly desirable.

32. UNDP assistance would also be necessary for the financing of national training programmes of national IPF, intended for the training of professional technicians.

33. The countries of the group expressed the hope that the other UN specialised agencies, more especially, FAO, WHO, UNESCO, could consider the possibility of loaning the countries of the group material and technical support to ensure the smooth implementation of the programmes for the training of middle level and professional technicians, particularly by placing at the disposal of these countries, course materials for sectorial statistical teaching. Should funds be available, it would be necessary that these agencies organise regularly training seminars in specific areas in addition to the basic training given to the statistical staff.

34. Efforts to promote statistics in the Portuguese-speaking African countries should not overlook a parallel development of staff and computer processing equipment. Unfortunately, some of the countries of the group do not seem to have such facilities: this is the case of Guinea Bissau which does not have any at all, Cape Verde and Sao Tome & Principe have only two micro-computers financed by United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) within the framework of the recent projects on the general population census. It would therefore be desirable that the European Economic Community consider favourably the needs of certain countries of the group in computer equipment, and include these needs among those already declared in this area by other African countries, during the recent Joint EEC/ACP/ECA study.

35. Since the meeting on the statistical training needs of the Portuguese-speaking African countries calls for the mobilization of huge financial resources, these countries hoped that national or multi-national bodies such as the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the Ministry of Economic Development of Portugal, the French Ministry of Co-operation and Development, the European Communities Commission (DG8), would offer financial and technical assistance in organising the various training programmes identified in this document.

V. CONCLUSION

36. The promotion of statistics in the Portuguese-speaking African countries requires tremendous joint efforts both on the part of the countries themselves, the ECA within the framework of the regional component of the STPA as well as the specialised agencies of the UN system and certain national or multi-national bodies. Although most of these specialised agencies and bodies have already initiated or programmed individual actions in this area in favour of the countries of the group, a co-ordination of these actions at the level of the ECA appears very appropriate and would no doubt have impact on the countries concerned.

37. If the Portuguese-speaking African countries should give priority to the promotion of statistics for an effective economic and social development planning, these countries should do everything possible to facilitate the provision of the relevant training facilities. In general, a sustained effort is expected from the technical heads of the countries of the group so as to ensure the promotion of statistics recommended by the ECA study.

38. The meeting is invited to:

(i) make proposals regarding future actions that ECA should take within the framework of the statistical training at all levels, on the proposed special assistance to the Portuguse-speaking African countries; future actions may take the form of:

- training of a greater number of staff,
- assistance in the search for solutions to specific problems facing Angola and Mozambique,
- training of instructors,
- development of technical materials (Course supports) in Portuguese language.

(ii) make comments and suggestions on the following main actions, proposed by ECA, that the countries of the group should take:

- permanent utilization of the College of Statistics of Dakar by Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome & Principe for the training of their senior technicians;
- utilization of the national universities of Angola and Mozambique for the training of senior technicians for these two countries;

- establishment of a common unit for the training of middle level technicians in Bissau, which would be used by Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome & Principe and possibly Equatorial Guinea;

- establishment by Angola and Mozambique of national training units for the training of their middle level technicians.

(iii) make proposals regarding the idea of co-ordinating the actions of the ECA and those of other interested bodies, in favour of Portuguese-speaking African countries.